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COMMUNIST CAPABILITIES AND PROBABLE COURSES OF ACTION IN KOREA THROUGH MID-1952



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The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Joint Staff participated with the Central Intelligence Agency in the preparation of this estimate. All members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee concurred in this estimate on 29 November 1951.

COMMUNIST CAPABILITIES AND PROBABLE COURSES OF ACTION IN NORTH KOREA THROUGH MID-1952

THE PROBLEM

To estimate Communist capabilities and probable courses of action in Korea through mid-1952 in their relation to the Communist position in the Far East.

CONCLUSIONS

1. We believe that the Communist objective, to extend Communist control over all Korea, remains unchanged.
2. The Communist forces are capable of continuing large-scale operations in Korea through mid-1952.
3. We believe that during the period of this estimate it will not be possible for Communist forces to drive the UN from Korea, unless major Soviet units are directly committed. We do not believe the USSR will be willing to commit such units because of the inherent risks of precipitating general war. However, unless the present unrestricted Communist air build-up is checked or countered, we believe the growing power of the Chinese Communist forces, even without direct commitment of Soviet units, will enable them to deal severe damage to the UN forces and may make it impossible for the UN to conduct general offensive operations except at prohibitive cost.
4. Prolongation of the war in Korea at present levels would add to the economic and political difficulties of Communist China and North Korea, and would involve increased risk of extension of the war, but would be unlikely to have serious adverse effects on the USSR or on Sino-Soviet relations.
5. We believe that so long as the Korean war continues, the Chinese Communists are unlikely to engage in large-scale military operations against Indochina or Burma.
6. We believe that the Communists desire a suspension or termination of hostilities in Korea, but that their present position is not such as to oblige them to accept terms which they may regard as seriously disadvantageous. We believe the Communists will protract the military negotiations while there is a chance of obtaining concessions of actual or propaganda value. Thereafter, political negotiations will be prolonged in the confidence that while negotiations continue the UN will not renew or widen hostilities, and in the hope that popular pressures in the West will oblige the UN to conclude a settlement on terms more favorable to the Communists.
7. On the other hand, the possibility cannot be excluded that the Communists are protracting the armistice negotiations merely to gain time to build up the Chi-

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nese Communist air and ground forces preparatory to launching an all-out offensive against UN forces in Korea. A decision to launch such an offensive might be taken at any time during negotiations.

8. Finally, we believe that the Communists will not agree to any political settlement unless they are convinced that it provides opportunities ultimately to subvert the Republic of Korea.

DISCUSSION

I. DETERMINANTS OF COMMUNIST INTENTIONS

Military Capabilities In Korea

Ground Forces Strength

1. Enemy ground forces in Korea are estimated at 610,000 personnel including 378,000 Chinese and 232,000 North Koreans. In addition, there are 258,000 Chinese Communist troops in Manchuria plus three North Korean divisions.

2. There is evidence that the North Korean Army is now unable to replace its combat losses completely. One North Korean division was deactivated in July 1951 and a Korean corps was recently relieved by a CC division — the first relief of this type since the hostilities began. On the other hand, the Chinese Communists have been able to replace their heavy losses.

3. Despite hardships, heavy casualties, and the growing proportion of only partially trained recruits, the effectiveness of Communist and North Korean troops has not been seriously affected by a decline in morale. Communist troops have surrendered in numbers only when unit control has broken down and resistance was hopeless. The high proportion of ex-Kuomintang troops among the Chinese Communist forces does not appear to be a significant factor affecting Communist reliability or morale.

4. The 7,500 battle-hardened guerrillas estimated presently to be in South Korea constitute a threat to public security and ROK rehabilitation in that area. The ROK has recently withdrawn two divisions from the battle lines for commitment to anti-guerrilla activities.

Ground Force Logistics

5. The logistic capabilities of the Communists in Korea have been limited by the UN interdiction of supply lines and the lack of flexibility of their supply system. Supplies have had to be accumulated over a long period to support their offensives. Moreover, Communist inability to provide adequate transport facilities to support front line units has prevented the Communists from maintaining the momentum of their offensives. Present stockpiles are sufficient in volume to support an offensive with forces now deployed for about thirty days. Although in past offensives the enemy could not move supplies from forward stockpiles to using units rapidly enough to maintain the momentum of an offensive for more than five to seven days, the Communists may now be overcoming this difficulty.

6. Although the Communists have brought in increasing amounts of transport equipment and have made a tremendous effort to repair and maintain lines of communication, UN air attacks have exacted a heavy toll on rail facilities, trucks, and bridges, and have greatly reduced operational efficiency of the Communist supply lines. Truck losses apparently have been replaced by deliveries from the USSR.

7. The food situation in North Korea is serious and the Communist forces in Korea must depend to a large extent upon Manchurian food supplies. The Manchurian harvest is believed to have been normal and to have provided an ample grain surplus to meet military requirements.

Air Force Strength

8. The Chinese Communist-North Korean Air Forces are estimated to have available approximately 1,450 combat aircraft of which at least 800 are jet fighters. Of this total 1,075 aircraft (including 535 jet fighters) are estimated to

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be in Manchuria and the remainder are believed to be based in China proper, primarily around Peiping, Shanghai, and Canton. During recent months Communist air strength in the China-Manchuria-North Korean area has increased rapidly, with the greatest increase being in MIG-15 jet fighters.

9. The combat potential and effectiveness of the CCAF-NKAF have improved rapidly during the past six months and must now be considered formidable. By USAF standards the Communists are believed to be reaching a fairly high state of training. There have been numerous reports of intensive ground attack, navigational and paratrooper training. Actual UN experience has demonstrated that the Communists are capable of successful day and limited night interception, radar directed high altitude antiaircraft gunnery, and large formation tactics with jet fighters. The MIG-15 has been highly effective in the role of fighter versus bomber, the purpose for which it was designed. The performance pattern of the MIG-15 jet fighter units has been spotty, however, particularly in operations against UN fighters.

10. The full extent of Soviet Air Force participation is not known, but the use of Soviet technical advisors and the organizational pattern strongly indicate a dominating Soviet influence throughout the CCAF. It is probable that Soviet Air Force personnel are operating aircraft accredited to the CCAF.

Air Force Logistics

11. The Chinese Communist and North Korean Air Forces are wholly dependent upon the USSR for aircraft spare parts and associated equipment and largely dependent upon Soviet sources for POL. It is within the Soviet capability to augment greatly the Chinese Communist air strength at any time. These aircraft could come from the Soviet Far Eastern Air Forces, from Europe, or from Soviet production which is estimated to include 500 MIG-15's per month. Within a relatively short period of time a large part of the estimated T/O and E strength of 5,500 aircraft in the Soviet Far East Air Force could be made available for operation in the Korean air war.

12. The intensive airfield repair and facilities build-up which has been accomplished throughout China and Manchuria during the past year has produced a system of airfields which would enable the CCAF-NKAF to employ all types of aircraft, including jet fighters in sustained operations and TU-4's in limited operations. The newly developed air facilities in Manchuria provide excellent air defense of Manchuria and support to the Communist forces fighting in Korea. In addition, they could be utilized as medium bomber bases for attacks against important United States bases in South Korea, Japan, and Okinawa. Maximum efforts to recondition and expand airfields in North Korea have continued. Three new airfields in northwest Korea may be ready for jet fighter operations by mid-December.

Naval Forces

13. The naval forces of the Chinese Communists and North Koreans are insignificant. The combat effectiveness of these forces is considered to be very low and their potential, barring the possible use of Soviet submarines, would continue to be distinctly limited for the period of this estimate. Mines laid by improvised mine layers present a continuing threat to UN Naval forces.

The USSR as a Source of Supply

14. The USSR must provide Communist forces in Korea with a large share of the replacements of munitions and other equipment for military use, including weapons, ammunition, tanks, trucks, artillery, petroleum, and aircraft, as well as trained personnel for instruction (tanks and artillery) and operation (anti-aircraft guns and aircraft). Munitions and equipment can probably be supplied from Soviet stocks or current production without creating a strain on the USSR. Since a substantial part of these supplies must be sent to the Far East from western and central USSR, however, the Korean war has undoubtedly placed a heavy burden on the Trans-Siberian Railroad.

15. The practical capacity of the Trans-Siberian Railroad is believed to be fully employed at the present time. It is unlikely that a significant increase in the flow of supplies to

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Korea could occur over the Trans-Siberian without cutting seriously into important Soviet military and civilian traffic.

16. There is some evidence that transloading points on the Siberian-Manchurian border are now handling cargo at close to capacity. Non-military railroad traffic has, moreover, been embargoed from time to time in Manchuria, which indicates that a significant increase in transit traffic to Korea might cause serious difficulties for the Manchurian economy.

Over-all Current Military Capabilities

17. The enemy can attack at any time with forces, presently in contact. These forces are composed of 29 infantry, 1 armored, and 4 artillery divisions with a personnel strength of 219,000, an estimated 80-120 tanks and approximately 500 artillery pieces. Also available in Korea are 43 infantry divisions, 2 armored divisions, 1 mechanized division, and 1 antitank division (391,000 personnel and 240-280 tanks). These forces could be committed within 2 to 10 days, but such a commitment would materially reduce Communist coastal defenses in Korea. In addition to his offensive capabilities, the enemy can defend in place with forces presently available and can conduct limited guerrilla operations behind UN lines.

18. Although the CCAF has been employed in a predominantly protective role thus far, it nevertheless poses an increasing threat to the safety of the United Nations forces deployed in the Korean theater. The CCAF has increased over-all Communist defensive and offensive capabilities, and has gained air superiority as far south as Sinanju on the Chongchon River to the extent of making UN daylight medium bombing efforts in the area exceedingly costly and diverting UN air elements from interdiction missions. The CCAF could launch an intense air attack which might inflict serious damage upon United Nations ground forces, naval and air installations, and lines of communication in Korea.

19. There are sufficient numbers of MIG-15 aircraft located in southern Manchuria to provide a strong fighter defense for this area.

The fighter defense capabilities of China proper are considerably less and, should several areas of China be attacked simultaneously, the presently available forces would be spread too thinly for effective defense.

Trends in Military Capabilities

20. Through mid-1952 the Chinese Communists can maintain their present troop strength and combat potential in Korea. Assuming that the present ratio of UN Communist air effectiveness remains unchanged, the Chinese Communists could deploy and logistically support in Korea 9 to 12 additional divisions, including the equivalent of three armored divisions. It should be noted, however, that if the Communists decided to make a maximum effort in Korea, reduced the effectiveness of the UN interdiction, and sacrificed commitments elsewhere they might be able to increase troop strength in Korea to approximately 1,500,000 men. On the other hand, an increase in the effectiveness of the UN interdiction effort would make difficult even a moderate increase in Communist troop strength. It is unlikely that within the next few months the effectiveness of Communist units now in Korea could be substantially raised by the receipt of increased amounts of heavy equipment alone. Although the USSR has the capability to make available substantial quantities of heavy equipment to Communist troops in Korea, these troops would require considerable further training to use such equipment effectively.

21. The aircraft strength presently available to the Communist forces operating in Korea could be increased by mid-1952 to a level dependent only on Soviet intentions and capabilities. The continuing extensive build-up of aircraft, ostensibly operating as units of the CCAF, has been to meet the specific requirements of the Korean operation. The over-all air defense capabilities of China will probably continue to increase.

22. In the event of an armistice, Communist ability to increase their military potential in North Korea would depend to some extent on the nature of the inspection provisions. Even should the armistice provide for inspection measures effectively preventing the augmen-

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tation of forces in Korea, however, Communist capabilities could be increased considerably by the repair and construction of roads, railroads, and other facilities under the guise of rehabilitation.

Military Capabilities In the Far East Elsewhere Than In Korea

23. The Chinese Communists have the capability of undertaking military operations elsewhere in the Far East in addition to the present large-scale operations in Korea. They could initiate large-scale operations as an alternative to the present military operations in Korea.

a. *Taiwan.* The Communists have been building up their air and coastal defense capabilities on the mainland opposite Taiwan. Thus far, the heavy Communist military commitment in Korea and the assignment of the US Seventh Fleet to patrol the Taiwan straits probably have forced the Chinese Communists to postpone any attempt to invade the island.

b. *Hong Kong.* Regardless of the outcome of the cease-fire negotiations, the Chinese Communists will continue to have the capability of launching a successful attack on Hong Kong with few preparations and with little advance warning.

c. *Southeast Asia.* In Indochina, the Chinese Communists probably could support approximately 100,000 men for a series of limited offensives of short duration. Logistic preparations in South China are sufficiently advanced to support limited Chinese Communist air operations against Indochina. The Chinese Communists probably could make available approximately 50,000 men for sustained operations in Burma. However, so long as they are committed in Korea, the Chinese Communists probably would not be able to support logistically large-scale ground operations in Burma and Indochina concurrently.

d. *Japan.* The Chinese Communists do not have the capability to attack Japan without large-scale Soviet support.

The Internal Situation in Communist China

24. The mobilization of Communist China's limited economic resources for the prosecution of the Korean war has undoubtedly increased internal economic and political pressures and required Peiping to modify its economic and political programs. There is evidence that, at least in part as a consequence of hostilities in Korea, inflationary pressures have increased, production of certain consumer goods has lagged, production objectives have been reduced, purges of "counter-revolutionaries" have been intensified, and popular support of the regime has decreased. In addition, some reports hint at policy disagreements within the Chinese Communist Party stemming from the Korean war.

25. On the other hand, the Chinese Communists thus far have apparently been able to support their military operations in Korea without suffering such serious consequences in China as a breakdown of rail transportation, an increase in anti-Communist guerrilla activity, outbreaks of large-scale civil disorders, or a shortage of manpower on the Korean front. It is believed that the Communists can continue the war through the coming winter without incurring any of these consequences.

26. Communist China is not likely to face serious problems supplying its forces in Korea during the next several months. To an increasing extent the USSR is providing Chinese as well as North Korean forces in Korea with heavy munitions and equipment, while Communist China continues to furnish most of the small arms, ammunition, food and clothing to its own troops. There is no evidence that the drain on the Chinese transportation system resulting from the transfer of trucks and rolling stock to Manchuria and Korea has as yet had a serious effect on the Chinese economy. However, continued increases in military transport requirements will necessitate further reductions in commercial freight movements in China and will place further pressure on the already-strained railroad maintenance facilities.

27. Although Communist China has enormous manpower resources, the inflexible labor

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requirements of Chinese agriculture limit the mobility of the Chinese labor force. Thus local labor shortages do exist and will probably be intensified by Peiping's conscription of manpower for military and para-military purposes. Furthermore, Communist China is faced with an urgent need for technicians for both the army and the expanding bureaucracy. This shortage of trained personnel has serious implications for the administrative capabilities of the regime.

28. The marked increase in the rate of public expenditure since the start of the Korean war has forced a drastic increase in taxes and a marked intensification of tax collection, especially in rural areas. A continuation of the Korean war with an inevitable additional increase in taxes will further diminish the rural support which was gained by Peiping during the initial period of land redistribution. Inflationary pressures have been built up as a result of the budgetary deficit and the continued diversion of production to military uses. Consequent price increases, while in no sense as sharp as those characterizing the Nationalist postwar economy, have been significant, and prices will almost certainly continue to rise as the Korean war goes on.

29. The Korean war has undoubtedly obliged the Chinese Communists to rely increasingly on police and administrative controls rather than on popular support. Within the Communist party leadership itself, the Korean war may raise, if indeed it has not already done so, potentially divisive issues such as: (a) the protraction of the war at the continued sacrifice of domestic objectives; (b) increased Soviet intervention in internal Chinese affairs as a concomitant of Soviet aid; and (c) further intensification of internal controls at the expense of popular support.

The Internal Situation In North Korea

30. The North Korean regime is faced with much more serious internal economic and political problems than is Communist China, and a continuation of hostilities will almost certainly intensify these difficulties. The regime continues to control the North Korean police and army; however, and decreasing

popular support poses no serious threat. The North Korean regime can be expected to continue to support Soviet policy regardless of the consequences within Korea since it is dedicated to the Kremlin's international objectives and is incapable of exercising a decisive influence on major Communist policy decisions with respect to the war. However, the maintenance of a viable and stable Satellite regime in North Korea may be an important objective of Soviet policy.

31. The food situation in North Korea may become critical for the civilian population by spring. Consumer goods other than food are virtually nonexistent. Transportation and communication facilities are apparently maintained only along essential lines of supply. Industrial establishments have been in large part destroyed. Manpower shortages have already interfered with rehabilitation and agricultural production. They may soon affect essential rear area services for the army and further cripple the civilian economy.

32. These difficulties, together with the social and psychological effects of prolonged devastation and inconclusive war, have accentuated antagonisms between the people and the regime of North Korea. The temporary occupation of large areas of North Korea by UN forces, the presence of large numbers of unpopular Chinese troops and the frustrated hopes of victory and unification have been additional factors forcing the regime to resort increasingly to harsh police controls.

33. There have been reports of serious friction between the leadership of Communist China and that of North Korea, including reports of friction with regard to the respective roles of the Chinese Communists and the North Koreans in the conduct of the war. There is no convincing evidence, however, that friction is sufficiently serious to threaten united Communist prosecution of the war or the conclusion of an armistice.

Sino-Soviet Relations*

34. While the Chinese Communists probably entered the Korean war in full accord with the

* A comprehensive analysis of Sino-Soviet relations, NIE-58, is currently in preparation.

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USSR, the heavy burden of the war and Peiping's dependence on the USSR for vital war supplies have undoubtedly created problems in the relations between the two governments. There is no evidence, however, that these problems are sufficiently serious or are likely to become so serious as to create major divergences in the policies of the two powers. While the Korean war has increased the military prestige of Communist China, the war has almost certainly strengthened the hold of Moscow on Peiping.

35. North Korea is important to the defense of Soviet and Chinese borders, and any serious threat to its integrity may, in the Communist view, be a threat also to the USSR and Communist China. South Korea is of strategic value to the Communists principally as an offensive base and, in anti-Communist hands, represents a military and psychological threat to the Communist position in North Korea.

II. CURRENT INDICATIONS OF COMMUNIST COURSES OF ACTION

36. Current intelligence provides no conclusive indications of probable Communist courses of action with regard to either Korea or other areas in the Far East. Recent Communist propaganda and their concessions in the armistice negotiations both can be interpreted as indications of a Communist desire to obtain a cease-fire. Moreover, the pattern of Communist military activity in Manchuria and North Korea can be interpreted as an attempt to improve the Communist bargaining position in the armistice negotiations. On the other hand, the prolongation of these discussions can be interpreted as an indication of Communist efforts to create dissension among participating UN governments and undermine their resolution to remain in Korea. Furthermore, Communist efforts to develop air capabilities, maintain ground strength in Korea, and mobilize the total resources of China may indicate a Communist intent to resume large-scale offensive actions at a later date.

Indications of Communist Intentions From Communist Military Activities

37. Communist military activities in Korea, Manchuria, and China indicate that the Chinese are making preparations to continue military operations for an indefinite period of time. Current indications suggest that these operations in the immediate future will probably be characterized on the ground by limited objective attacks and determined resistance in depth to UN offensives and in the air by further efforts to extend Communist air superiority over much of Communist-held North Korea. On the other hand, the introduction of some armor and increasing amounts of artillery into North Korea, the continued efforts to achieve a logistic build-up, and the strenuous efforts to develop air capabilities could be interpreted as indications of a Communist plan to mount a major offensive.

38. The Communist air build-up, though primarily a Soviet effort, does not provide conclusive evidence as to future Soviet courses of action with respect to Korea. It could indicate any or all of the following: (a) a Soviet recognition that a major Communist air effort is necessary to bolster Chinese Communist morale and improve their military positions; (b) a Soviet intent to secure the defense of Manchuria in the event of an expansion of the war; (c) a Soviet attempt to improve the Communist bargaining position in the armistice negotiations; (d) a Soviet intent to challenge UN air superiority in Korea; and (e) a Soviet intent to build up Soviet air defenses throughout the Communist Far East and gain air combat experience.

39. Other activity in China proper indicates a Communist determination to continue full-scale military mobilization. Furthermore, the indications are that the Chinese Communists intend to continue supplying material and advisory assistance to the Viet Minh and the Burmese Communists. There are no positive indications of an early intent to send regular Chinese Communist troops into either area.

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Indications From Communist Propaganda

40. Communist propaganda after the Chinese Communist intervention in Korea stressed determination to drive the UN forces from Korea and insisted that any settlement must include Chinese Communist acquisition of Taiwan and the admission of Communist China to the UN. Shortly before the Malik statement, propaganda emphasis shifted. The "Drive-the-invaders-into-the-sea" theme was replaced by the claim that driving the "invaders" back to the 38th Parallel represented a great victory. Previous political demands were no longer mentioned in the context of the immediate problem of a Korean settlement. Although Communist propaganda cannot be interpreted as a firm indication of Communist intentions with respect to Korea, propaganda analysis suggests, on balance, that the Communists desire a suspension or even a termination of hostilities. It also suggests that the Communists are desirous of obtaining a Korean political settlement based on the pre-invasion situation in Korea and including the withdrawal of UN troops. Furthermore, Communist propaganda emphasis on "Asian unity" in the face of US "imperialist aggression" suggests that ultimate Communist objectives in Asia—including the withdrawal of US protection from Taiwan and admission of Communist China to the UN—have not changed.

Indications of Communist Intentions From Their Conduct of Armistice Negotiations

41. Communist actions during the armistice negotiations indicate a strong desire not to have the discussions terminated. The Communists have made a number of important concessions which, taken together, represent such a significant departure from their originally announced position as to indicate desire to secure a cease-fire. The negotiations to date do not provide indication, however, of Communist willingness to conclude an armistice on terms satisfactory to the UN.

Indications of Communist Intentions From Communist Policies Elsewhere in the Far East

42. In addition to the continued propaganda stress on the need for military preparedness, Peiping has placed increasing emphasis recently on domestic problems. Taken together with the ostensible Communist interest in a Korean armistice, this could indicate a Chinese Communist intent to reduce its Korean commitment in the near future in order to concentrate for an indefinite time on domestic programs. Communist policies elsewhere in the Far East give no clear indication of Communist intentions with regard to Korea but indicate that toward other neighboring countries the Communists intend to follow their present policy based on "Asian unity" and "national liberation."

III. COMMUNIST INTENTIONS

43. The Communist forces are capable of continuing large-scale operations in Korea through mid-1952. We believe that during the period of this estimate it will not be possible for Communist forces to drive the UN from Korea, unless major Soviet units are directly committed. We do not believe the USSR will be willing to commit such units because of the inherent risks of precipitating general war. However, unless the present unrestricted Communist air build-up is checked or countered, we believe the growing power of the Chinese Communist forces, even without direct commitment of Soviet units, will enable them to deal severe damage to the UN forces and may make it impossible for the UN to conduct general offensive operations except at prohibitive cost.

44. Unless the Soviets are prepared to provide the support necessary to achieve maximum Communist objectives in Korea, the Communists have two alternative courses of action: (a) to accept an indefinite prolongation and possible expansion of the war, or (b) to settle the conflict on the best terms possible.

45. Taking into account the various factors bearing on Communist policy in Korea, we believe that the Communists desire to stop

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the fighting in Korea in order to: (a) avoid a possible expansion of the war which might oblige the USSR either to introduce Soviet military forces on a large-scale or to accept the extension of non-Communist control as far as the Soviet and Manchurian borders of Korea; (b) prevent the further development of strains on the Communist regimes of China and North Korea which might ultimately threaten their stability; (c) permit Communist China to complete the modernization of its armed forces, to develop more effective administrative and police controls, and to develop a stronger industrial and economic base; (d) restore North Korea as a "model satellite" with the potential for the subversion of the Republic of Korea; (e) permit increased efforts to extend Communist influence and control to southeast Asia and the Far East generally. We are unable to determine what relation a Communist desire for a suspension or termination of hostilities in Korea would have to Soviet global policies.

46. We believe that the Communists desire a suspension or termination of hostilities in Korea, but that their present position is not

such as to oblige them to accept terms which they may regard as seriously disadvantageous. We believe the Communists will protract the military negotiations while there is a chance of obtaining concessions of actual or propaganda value. Thereafter, political negotiations will be prolonged in the confidence that while negotiations continue the UN will not renew or widen hostilities, and in the hope that popular pressures in the West will oblige the UN to conclude a settlement on terms more favorable to the Communists.

47. On the other hand, the possibility cannot be excluded that the Communists are protracting the armistice negotiations merely to gain time to build up the Chinese Communist air and ground forces preparatory to launching an all-out offensive against UN forces in Korea. A decision to launch such an offensive might be taken at any time during negotiations.

48. Finally, we believe that the Communists will not agree to any political settlement unless they are convinced that it provides opportunities ultimately to subvert the Republic of Korea.

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